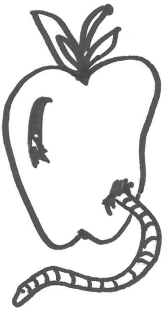
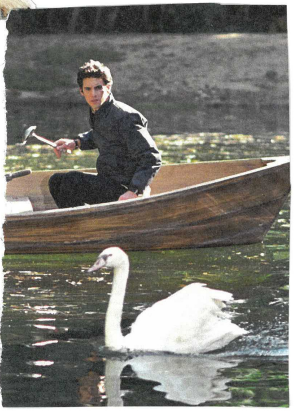
STARS HOLLOW PROBLEM CHILD





a
Marie Songer
and
the Problem
Child
fanfiction

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Thursday night was the most important night of the Star's Hollow calendar year, as it marked the beginning of the annual Problem Child Ceremony. Townsfolk from all around the walkable community gathered at the local dance studio, eagerly awaiting the beginning of the town meeting that would usher in the event. One such citizen was a 40-something-year-old man, named Gil. He was a sandwich shop owner by day, and travelling rockstar by night, if one were to consider going to his friend's house for band rehearsal an acceptable use of the term 'traveling'.

As Gil made his way through the dance studio door, he had to lower his head a little, because his incredible height made all doorways a danger to proceed through. When he ducked his head under the frame, the change in atmospheric pressure caused his flowing blonde mane to be gently caressed by the autumnal winds. Gil grinned, since this was considered an omen of good tidings to come in his native land of Los Angeles.

Gil used his tall stature to his advantage, scanning the room for any open seats. As luck would have it, there was an empty seat near the middle of the auditorium, just next to the aisle. Gil moved across the room, his leg span requiring less steps than the average, smaller human to cross, and quickly found himself next to a familiar presence. He looked down at the woman, who was engaged in a one-way conversation with nobody in particular, stringing together song lyrics and personal anecdotes into a completely incoherent but utterly riveting monologue.

"Psst, Lorelai," said Gil to the woman sitting closest to the aisle. "Is this seat taken?"

Lorelai turned to face him, with a chipper yet scatterbrained demeanor that suggested she would benefit from a high dosage of Vyvanse. She was a beautiful woman, with hair brown like dark roast coffee, skin pale like hazelnut coffee creamer, and eyes blue like Gatorade Frost Glacier Freeze. Truly she was a strange brew of a person, but Gil felt fortunate to call her a loose acquaintance.

"Hey, Gil! Sit down right here!" exclaimed Lorelai, patting the empty chair. She scooted over a little to give his lumbering frame more room to work with.

"You're a life saver," said Gil, plopping down in the chair. "My wife was supposed to come early to save some spots, but she told me she wasn't feeling too great, so I'm flying solo tonight."

"The sick wife stayed in the car," said Lorelai with a smile, referencing some random song from the 90's. "But you lucked out, because the only other open seats are next to Sam and Diane over there, and they are not nearly as fun to sit next to as I am." Lorelai pointed over to the two most generic white people Gil had ever seen, the types of humans who gave off unpaid extras on a 2000's WB show vibes.

"Well, cheers to us then," said Gil, causing an audible cackle from Lorelai.

"My boyfriend, Luke, was supposed to join me today, but he's off getting revenge on the swan who killed his nephew," said Lorelai, without any trace of sadness for the swan's victim.

“A swan killed his nephew?” asked Gil, totally shocked. “How did that happen?”

“It’s actually kinda wild,” said Lorelai, shifting her body to face Gil more. “It all started during Thanksgiving, when Jess, Luke’s nephew, was taking out the trash-”

The conversation between the two was cut off by the sound of a gavel. All eyes darted toward the stage, landing upon Taylor, a reubenesque boomer who was perched behind his emotional support podium. Taylor was dressed in a red and white striped suit jacket that was barely held together by a series of corroded gold buttons, and a white dress shirt that acted as a flimsy vessel for several sweat stains collected throughout his work day. He was unable to find time after work to change into the costume he had chosen for this year’s event, which was effectively the same outfit but with a black pinstripe suit jacket, so he carried the quiet shame of being grossly underdressed to his favorite execution.

“Good evening, citizens of Stars Hollow, and welcome to the annual Problem Child Ceremony!” announced Taylor, as the crowd erupted into applause. “Every year, we gather to celebrate the demise of the town’s ‘Problem Child’, Mary Singer, who caused a massive riot in protest of the Revolutionary War, an event which had ended 85 years prior to her birth. According to newspaper reports found in the Stars Hollow library, Mary was incredibly deft at avoiding local law enforcement, and had successfully avoided capture a staggering thirteen times between the years of 1892 and 1894, thanks to a series of tunnels she had dug under the-”

“Get to the point!” shouted Lorelai, followed by applause from the rest of the audience, who all failed to recognize she was referencing yet another 90’s song.

Taylor resumed hitting the podium with his gavel, trying to quell the noise coming from the citizens he despised so much. Were he given the power,

Taylor would cleave everyone in the room in half with rusty hatchets, but the town laws forbade him from doing so.

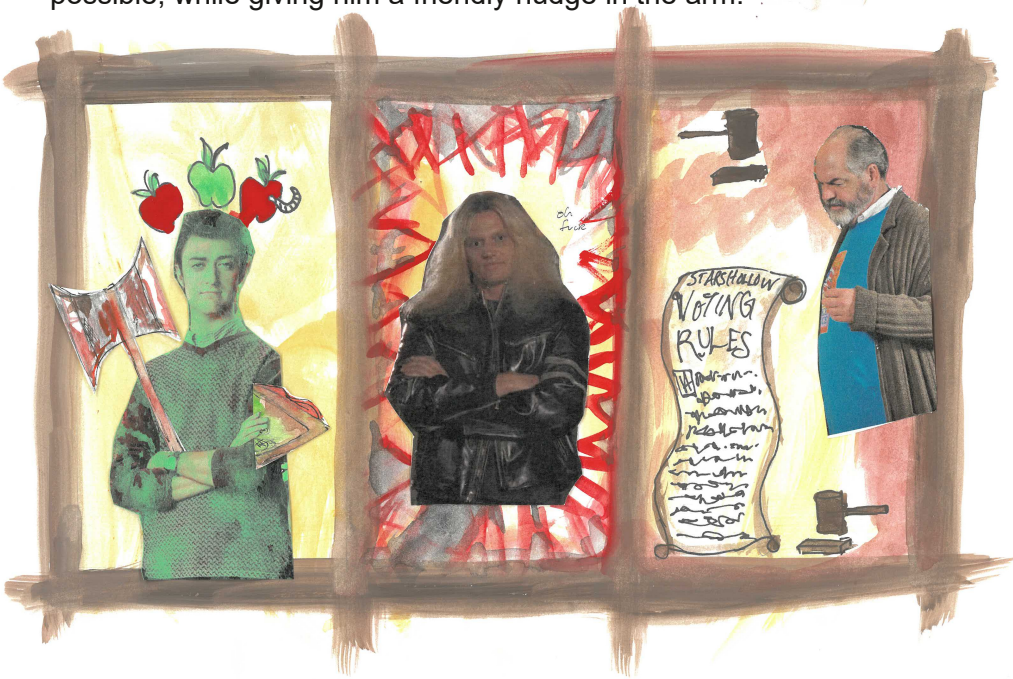
"Thankfully," continued Taylor, his voice heavy with annoyance. "Mary was eventually arrested, and asked the court to defend her name through a trial by combat. Mary was then defeated in a duel by a local transient, known as 'The Apple Goblin', who occupied our local orchard during the fall months." Taylor paused, realizing that the audience would once again turn on him were he to try to give another brief history lesson. "So, to commemorate that historic event, we will select a new Problem Child, who will then be hunted by this year's volunteer Apple Goblin, Kirk!"

The crowd burst into uproarious applause when Kirk stepped forward from the shadows. A lime green body suit desperately clinging to his lanky frame, and a slightly off-colored green face paint was slathered all over his head. In one hand, he held the Apple Goblin's ceremonial antique hatchet, covered in a century's worth of blood stains and rust. In the other he held half of an apple and peanut butter sandwich, which he was still in the process of eating. The very edges of the bread were home to several very faint green lip prints. Kirk gave a quiet wave to the audience with the hand holding the sandwich, sending one apple slice flying into the first row. A few residents dove for the small sliver of apple, trying to catch it like a guitar pick thrown into the audience by a Grammy award winning rockstar.

Once again, Taylor used his gavel to draw the attention back to himself, exasperated by the joy that was shown to every other person in the room but him.

“Let’s go over the voting rules,” Taylor announced, unfurling a large scroll that was tucked into a secret compartment in the inside lining of his vest. “The Problem Child must be a troubadour, or any musician who has performed for an audience within the last calendar year. For the purposes of this vote, and due to the already staggeringly low population of Stars Hollow, a musician is defined as someone who either sings or plays a musical instrument in public places.”

“That’s you, Gil!” exclaimed Lorelai with the loudest whisper possible, while giving him a friendly nudge in the arm.



Gil became overwhelmed with dread, since he was a recent transplant to Stars Hollow, unaware of the local customs. He had already performed shows around the town, mostly at children’s parties, which made him eligible for nomination. Gil was mostly confident he could take Kirk in a fight, but also knew from all his years getting into bar fights in LA that socially awkward people who volunteered for combat tended to be the most terrifying opponents. Gil tried to slouch further into his seat, but his long torso betrayed him, causing his body to stand out in the crowd.

“I nominate Taylor,” shouted Gypsy, a local mechanic wielding a monkey wrench. “Taylor performed karaoke two months back, and I saw him rap a song by the Beastie Boys at an open mic night!”

The crowd gasped at these revelations, not only because it could spell the end of Taylor, but also because if true, it meant that many of them had missed Taylor rapping in public.

Taylor sighed deeply, because he knew that Gypsy was trying to get him murdered through a technicality. With a flick of his wrist, he unfurled the scroll a little further, exposing more of the rules. “Which brings us to the second rule, no troubadour may be nominated if they play a crucial role in the town's economy.”

“That’s also you, Gil!” exclaimed Lorelai with another loud whisper, bringing a huge sense of relief to her seatmate.

“Your ice cream shop is not essential!” shouted Gypsy.

“I am also the owner of a local market, from which a majority of you purchase your groceries!” Taylor barked back with a snide tone, pointing his gavel at the audience. The crowd muttered reluctant agreement with Taylor’s statement, wishing there were more grocery stores within Stars Hollow proper. “Any other nominees?”

“I nominate Rory Gilmore!” shouted the local bookstore owner, Andrew.

“Hey!” shouted Lorelai, indignant at the mention of her daughter’s name.

“Young Rorelai came to my place of business and read aloud lyrics to the song ‘London Calling’, which had been inscribed into the introductory section of a music history tome! And, when questioned about her intentions to purchase the book, Rory said she was unable to, due to not having secure employment!” Andrew’s crimson cardigan cast a faint red glow over the room, a symbol of his bloodlust.

The crowd gasped, shaking their heads in disapproval of Rory’s actions.

Lorelai jumped to her feet, “Hold on a-”

“Look over yonder,” said Andrew, using a large bookmark in the shape of an arrow to guide the audience’s eyes toward the open barn door. “Cast your eyes upon the true blight of this town!” The crowd turned their heads to gaze into the horizon, quickly realizing that it wasn’t the Earth that the sun was setting behind, rather Rory’s massive forehead in the distance. The crowd began to chatter about

the vast expanse between Rory's eyebrows and the base of her hair, wondering why it took her until season 5 to grow bangs.

Lorelai's anger caused her to lightly levitate off the ground, and her voice began to grow louder. "We are not-"

"Any other votes for Rory?" asked Taylor, not giving Lorelai a chance to finish her sentence.

Several hands shot up from the audience, eager to name Lorelai's one and only daughter this year's Problem Child.

"Enough!" shouted Lorelai, her voice causing the color to drain from Andrew's cardigan, staining the floor underneath. Her eyes became white like Gatorade Frost Glacier Cherry, as she raised her hands high into the air, summoning a harsh blizzard onto the peaceful town. The gale brought a torrent of snow and hail down upon the citizens, whose raised hands quickly shifted to shield their faces from the elemental assault. Their screams of terror were drowned out by the howls of the winds.

Despite his best attempt to withstand the sudden change in

temperature, Andrew's body quickly gave way to the frost, as each cell in his body froze into solid ice. With his final breath, the last of the heat was rapidly ejected from his body, replaced only by the unforgiving cold of Lorelai's wrath. The winter chill overtook him, and Lorelai descended back to the ground. With a flick of her wrist, the snow and ice dispersed from almost every part of the room, slamming the door behind them. Andrew's frozen corpse was left as a chilling reminder of what would happen to any other person dared to nominate Lorelai's only child.

Lorelai returned to her chair, allowing the rest of the room to stop cowering at her feet. "Things can only get better," she said, referencing a song used in an Irish political campaign in the 90's. Nobody in the audience caught her reference, because they were all recovering from hypothermia.

As the crowd tried to bounce back from Lorelai's supernatural murder of the bookstore owner, the barn doors were kicked open again, exposing the wrath of yet another mother looking to protect her daughter. Mrs. Kim, an antique's dealer who carried the religious piety and sexual magnetism of a medieval crusader, came marching into the town hall. Being dragged behind her was her daughter's boyfriend and Gil's bandmate, Zack, a shaggy haired guitarist who was the poster child for slackers everywhere. As she crossed the threshold into the building, she flung Zack forward, causing him to slide down the central aisle like a front-facing bobsledder.

"Hey, Zack!" shouted Gil as Zack zipped past him. Before Zack could respond, he crashed into the Taylor's podium, sending everyone on stage but Kirk flying backwards like bowling pins.

"I nominate Zack Van Gerbig!" shouted Mrs. Kim, pointing an accusatory finger at him, her voice overpowering the auditorium. The words leaving her mouth caused Taylor's gavel to wilt in his hand, crumbling into dust rather than risk incurring the wrath of Lane's mom.

"He sings, plays several instruments, teaches music, and he is dating my daughter, who is too good for him! If anyone objects, you may challenge me now!" Mrs. Kim stood tall, unflinching in her declaration. Nobody else in the auditorium spoke, not even Gil, who knew that Zack was completely replaceable in the band.

"All in favor?" Taylor asked, trying to regain his footing.

"Aye!" shouted the entire room.

"Sold!" shouted Mrs. Kim, causing the citizens to erupt into applause.

"Bummer," said Zack, quickly accepting his fate.

Several people in the front row picked Zack up, and brought him face to face with Kirk. "Your death will be quick and painless," said Kirk, taking another bite out of his sandwich.

"To the arena!" shouted Taylor, slapping his dust-covered hand against the remnants of his podium.

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The bloodthirsty townsfolk gathered around the gazebo at the center of town, which had been redecorated to look like a battle arena. Long streamers of varying autumnal colors were wrapped around the bars within the railings, to give the arena some seasonal charm. Only in Stars Hollow could people find a way to make murder feel quirky and fun.

"The swan was a fast swimmer, and it was also trained in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu!" continued Lorelai, in the fifteenth minute of her enthralling retelling of the death of Luke's nephew. "Jess was starting to feel the fatigue of battle. He was struggling to out-fight this bird in its natural element, and, to top it all off, his body was full of the sleepy turkey chemicals, from all the turkey he had eaten-"

"One line, single file!" shouted Mrs. Kim, interrupting Lorelai's stream of conscious storytelling. Mrs. Kim had set up a booth next to the dance barn, selling antique hatchets and apple sandwiches. A large line of people stretched out across the street, eager to purchase their food and weapons before the ceremony began.

"Do you think we have enough time to grab a snack?" asked Lorelai, eyeing Mrs. Kim's line of customers. "I'm kinda hungry, and would kill for a sandwich."

A few people in line overheard her, and began cautiously eyeing her.

"Not literally!" she exclaimed, backing away from the line. "It's a turn of phrase!" Lorelai looked over at the dance barn, unsettled by the people in line who were still watching her. "Can we just start the damn ceremony already?"

"Let the ceremony begin!" cried a voice from the dance barn, causing the crowds around the town square to begin cheering.

"Well, that was convenient," said Lorelai, as she and Gil rushed alongside the crowd toward the gazebo, intent on getting the best spots. Gil's towering stature made it easy for him to step over the smaller residents, each of his footsteps at least seven feet apart. As he reached the stage, he noticed how quiet everything was, and immediately realized that he had left Lorelai behind.

$6
$5

Zack and Kirk were ushered out of the barn by several armed guards, wearing garbs from their revolutionary war reenactment groups, since that was the closest period appropriate clothing available to most of the citizens. Zack and Kirk marched to the gazebo, like a bride and groom speedrunning the 'til death do us part' clause of their wedding vows. Many people in line for Mrs. Kim's shop began to abandon their spots, opting to buy their memorabilia for the event after blood was spilled. "Spots in line will not be saved!" shouted Mrs. Kim, causing the rest of the customers to create a much neater, more compact queue.

Gil watched Zack step onto the wooden stage, accepting that his bandmate would probably die today. He wondered how long the band should wait before advertising for a new guitarist.

"Before we begin, each contestant shall select their weapon," declared Taylor. "This year's Problem Child is free to use any melee weapons of his choosing. Zack, what do you pick?"

"I select my axe," said Zack, gesturing to his guitar, which was in the passenger seat of a station wagon illegally parked on a loading only curb down the street from them. Taylor saw the unattended parking violation and rolled his eyes, because he knew the parking enforcement officers were doing keg stands in front of the bookstore, using Andrew's frozen corpse to keep the keg extra frosty.

One of the revolutionary war reenactors sprinted to Zack's car, using the butt of his unloaded musket to smash the window.

"Dude, it's unlocked!" shouted Zack.

"Sorry," said the reenactor, opening the door to grab the guitar case. He sprinted back to deliver the axe, leaving the car door wide open. A few enterprising hoodlums took the opportunity to hop into the car, and began trying to hotwire it so they could joyride around the town square.

Zack unlocked his guitar case, revealing a knock-off Fender Stratocaster. He raised it high in the air, in an attempt to look cool for his fans, none of whom existed in reality. Lorelai and Gil gave a disproportionately loud cheer, the only voices in the crowd showing semi-ironic support for the doomed musician.

“Kirk, as The Apple Goblin, which weapon do you choose?” asked Taylor, carrying on the ceremony.

Kirk raised both items in his hand to his chest level, baiting the audience into cheering for one over the other. “Booooo!” shouted the audience, as Kirk raised the few bites left of the apple sandwich higher than the hatchet. Kirk lowered the sandwich, and raised up the hatchet a little higher, causing the audience to cheer. He continued this game a few more times, causing the audience to cheer louder for the hatchet every time it was raised up. “I select the ceremonial hatchet,” declared Kirk, causing everyone to lose their minds.

“Both participants have chosen their weapons, and now we shall go over the rules,” said Taylor, unfurling a long scroll. “Two shall enter, but only one shall leave victorious!” he shouted, tossing the scroll into the audience and stage diving off the gazebo railing. The audience exploded into celebration, while Taylor directed the crowd to push him in the direction of his soda shoppe.

The two warriors turned to face each other, both freezing in place, neither wanting to make the first move. The audience fell silent, watching them dramatically pose in the center of the gazebo. Zack’s eyes shifted around, trying to figure out what possible strategy he could use to get out of this predicament. He noticed all the townsfolk gnashing their teeth, unable to hold back their macabre desires. His eyes shifted over to his car, which was missing from the spot he illegally parked it. There was no turning back.

Zack felt an unnatural calm come over him, causing him to slowly shift the guitar in his hands. He instinctively began plucking a familiar tune, while using one foot to stomp out a steady four-count. “I’m gonna fight ‘em off. A seven nation army couldn’t hold me back!" he crooned, summoning all of his musical talent to replicate the budget blues rock hit that Jack White had cursed every Guitar Center employee to hear for the rest of eternity. As Zack bellowed out the song, Kirk leapt forward, wildly swinging his hatchet. Zack dodged

backward, still keeping perfect time with his foot stomps and note strumming, playing the song as if he wasn't in mortal danger at all.

Kirk unleashed a consistent stream of attacks, each one evaded by Zack, who had seemingly become possessed by a better musician. Zack leapt onto the gazebo railings and effortlessly danced around the perimeter of the battlefield, all while continuing his rendition of the vastly overrated White Stripes song. Kirk started to tire himself out with his aggressive combat style, and all of the sweat on his brow started to make the green face paint drip down into his eyes, impeding his vision. Kirk went to wipe the paint out of his eyes, giving Zack a perfect window to El Kabong his guitar over the volunteer executioner's head. With one swift strike, Kirk was rendered unconscious, his limp body flopping over the gazebo railing.
The crowd stood in stunned silence, before breaking out into a massive celebration. Children made a beeline toward Kirk, fighting to steal the ceremonial hatchet for themselves.

Zach stood tall on the railing, posing valiantly in an attempt to further compel the audience to celebrate, before he too flopped to the ground. Standing in his place, was the ghost of Mary Singer. "Come on, dudes, that was sick!" said Mary, trying to hype up the audience more. "Give it up for the White Stripes cover I just did!"

The crowd fell silent. Mrs. Kim shrieked at the sight of the ghost, and took off running to her house.

Mary looked over the crowd, confused as to why the audience was done with their cheering. She looked down, and saw Zack's unconscious body half way submerged in some shrubbery. "Oh, farts!" she said, realizing that her cover had been blown.

Taylor pushed his way through the crowd, making his way back onto the gazebo's stage. The grocery store owner came face to face with the poltergeist, giving her a once over, before turning back to his silent audience. "Towns people, it is my solemn duty to announce that this contest has ended in a disqualification, due to interference from an undead assailant. Perhaps next year we can have a fair contest," Taylor said, giving Mary a knowing glance.

"Whoa, chill out," said Mary, turning to address the audience. "Look everyone, I may be a ghost, and I may talk like a 90s caricature of someone from California, but I think this murder fest is kinda

whack! Music is the greatest art form in the world, and I think we should be supporting our local musicians, instead of watching them get murdered by some dude who looks kinda like Shrek. Why don't we put this annual tradition aside, and make a new tradition in this town! What if we did some sort of annual concert instead?"

The crowd began to look around at each other, softly murmuring their thoughts. Before they could come to a consensus, Mrs. Kim came sprinting out of her house, wearing a full suit of armor, with a bible in one hand, and a second bible in the other. “I shall cast you out, demon!” she cried, rushing toward Mary.

“Why don’t you all think this one over, and I’m going to run away before the antiques dealer sends me to hell or whatever,” said Mary, floating away into the sky. “Toodles!”

Mrs. Kim reached the stage, and dropped to her knees, praying extra hard to her god. A single beam of light shined down on her from the heavens, removing gravity’s hold on her, granting her the ability to levitate. Mrs. Kim took flight, in hot pursuit of the ghost she intended to exorcise.

“The ghost lady was right!” shouted Gil, taking one step forward onto the stage. “Music is kick ass, and we should be stoked to have musicians like Zack around, even if he’s kinda bogus at times!” Gil looked down at his bandmate, who had been stripped bare of all his belongings by child thieves.

“Gil’s right!” shouted Lorelai, while chewing a giant bite of apple sandwich. “Give peace a chance!” Her 90’s song reference was so thematically appropriate that people failed to realize she had snuck behind Mrs. Kim’s unattended booth, and was stuffing extra sandwiches into her purse.

The crowd began discussing whether or not they should allow musicians to live in their town without the annual threat of being sacrificed for an insane holiday tradition. The low murmurs became a fevered debate, where everyone simultaneously chimed in with their opinions.

“Gil!” shouted a voice from across the audience, a voice that Gil could only pick up because of how ungodly tall he was. Gil swiveled his head around,

until he saw his normal-size wife making her way toward the stage. Gil's wife was shouting some sort of news to him, but the loud crowd made her voice seemingly indistinguishable from everyone else's.

"What!?" shouted Gil. "I can't hear you!"

A few people in the crowd noticed the conversation and began to act as intermediaries for the two lovers struggling to communicate over the noise.

"Gil!" shouted one audience member.

"More!" shouted a second.

"Girls!" shouted a third.

The crowd around them, hearing this catchy phrase, began chanting it over and over, seemingly united by these three words. "Gil! More! Girls!"

Gil's wife finally reached the stage, embracing her husband. "The doctor said I'm pregnant! We've having twins! Two more girls!"

"No way!" shouted Gil, excited beyond belief. "This is the best news ever!" Gil and his wife kissed, as the crowd continued to chant, "Gil! More! Girls!"

"Well, it looks like my work here is done," said Lorelai, as she started to head home. She made her way across the town, and soon found herself at the pond, where her boyfriend was still engaged in grappling combat with the swan that had killed his nephew.

"Hey, Luke," said Lorelai, trying not to break his concentration. "I'm heading home. Can you bring me some burgers when you're done fighting this bird?"

"Yeah, yeah," said Luke, as he struggled to apply an arm bar to the swan's wing. "How about I serve you a stuffed swan instead?"

"Dirty!" she exclaimed, with a coy tone.

"I didn't mean it like that!" said Luke, struggling to counter the swan's triangle choke hold.

"Sure you didn't," she said, with a wink. "Hurry up, I only have three sandwiches left to tide me over."

Lorelai continued on her walk home. In the distance she could still hear the crowd chanting "Gil! More! Girls!", and in the sky above she could see the ghost of Mary Singer soaring through the clouds, with Mrs. Kim not far behind her.

"Best Problem Child Ceremony ever!"

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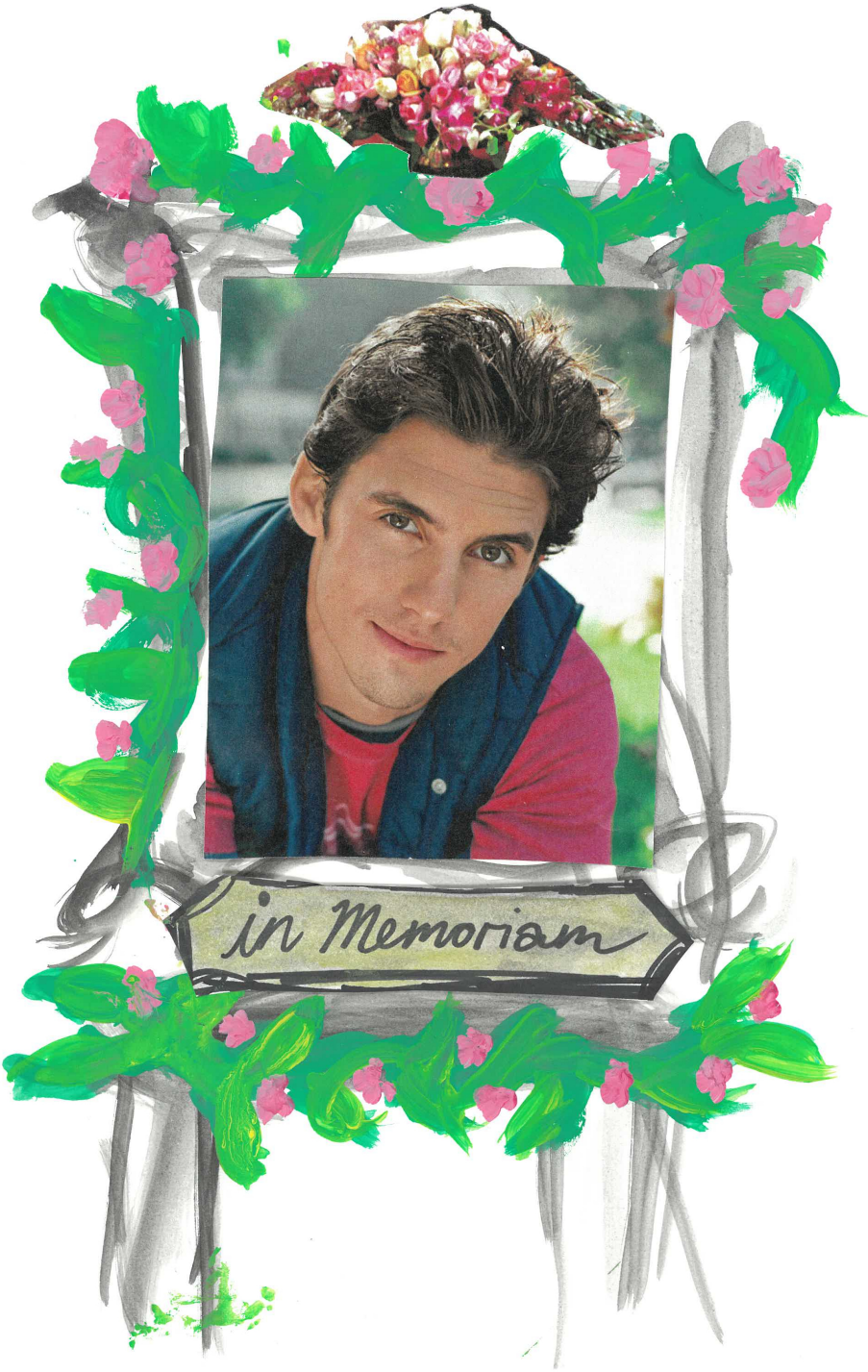
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